

*Patent Act—Trade Marks Act*

produce. These drugs could be combined with the products of other companies, and in that way a complete line of drugs could be marketed.

One hon. member raised the question, and I think it is a valid one, of the possibility of exporting drugs. He expressed the hope that one day Canada might produce efficiently enough to export drugs into world markets. I think that though this might be possible in the future it would not be under the present system where our drug industry is dominated by United States branch plants. Under the U.S. branch plant system markets are allocated. Companies are told where to go and where not to go. Under such a system, I do not think that drug exports can be anything more than a pious hope as far as we are concerned.

Were we to have a crown corporation of the type I envisage, exports would become a real possibility for Canada. A crown corporation would have credibility, being backed by the government of Canada. It would not have to hide its books from the government of Canada. Safety of its products would be assured by inspection services provided by the government of Canada. Again, it could act as an international marketing agency on behalf of some of our smaller generic drug manufacturers. It would be an example of where private industry and public enterprise could work together to the benefit of all. Perhaps it would not work to the benefit of that handful of companies that dominate the drug market and have abused the privilege; but in a situation of this kind somebody must suffer, and if the choice has to be between a few drug companies and the entire population of Canada, I think sympathy has to lie with the people of this country.

● (3:50 p.m.)

We have been told that there is some danger that research will be eliminated in Canada. When I hear statements like that I find it hard not to laugh out loud, especially since an examination of the figures will reveal that the amount of research carried out in this country is infinitesimal. On the other hand, if a crown corporation such as we have been suggesting were set up, we might get a great deal of research here. The crown corporation would have the facilities and the incentives to carry out research and to create a drug industry that would be indigenous to this country. It could absorb the scientists and bright young people coming from our universities and technical schools.

[Mr. Saltsman.]

During the committee hearings we heard the threat that if this bill were passed the big drug companies may move out of this country across the border. Some think that such a move on the part of the drug companies would be something to worry about. My reaction to that threat is, "I will make you a sandwich. When are you leaving?" The drug companies seem to think that only they can make drugs. Well, Mr. Speaker, 21 million people in this country need drugs and if the international drug companies now competing in Canada will not make our drugs, others will. If private investors are not willing to undertake the manufacture of drugs, a public corporation will be willing to do so. The point is that the people employed in the industry will remain employed in that industry. As a matter of fact perhaps more will be employed in research; less copying of the work of others will take place and this country may become important as a centre of drug manufacturing. There is no reason for Canadians to pay the kind of prices that prevail in the drug field now. As I pointed out, our drug prices are among the highest in the world. That situation is intolerable and passage of this legislation will indicate to those responsible for our high prices that we will no longer tolerate those high prices.

Although I could say a great deal more, I wish to stress again the importance of this legislation. As a party we have fought hard for it, harder than some members of the government have. Passage of this bill will show the world that our people, instead of being content to be dominated by economically powerful and monopolistic industries, wish to have the right to decide their own future, to make their own choices and to make their own value judgments. With passage of this bill, our people have won a great victory and set a new precedent.

**Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to mention one or two points related to this bill. The defenders of the drug industry and the people within the drug industry have called the bill half baked; the group to which I belong call it a half measure. The minister says that it will do the job of lowering drug prices. Time and experience will tell whether he is right. I hope the minister and his colleagues will not take too long before deciding whether the legislation is doing its intended work.